

## Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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Z O 221101Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 1273

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PIACT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6506

EXDIS

(DEPT TREAT AS NODIS)

DEPT PASS USDEL SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AEMR, US, LE

SUBJECT: BEIRUT EVACUATION

REF: (A) STATE 180858, (B) BEIRUT 6497

1. AFTER OVERNIGHT REFLECTION I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT PLO POSTPONEMENT OF OUR LAND CONVOY IS ESSENTIALLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. THERE ARE NUMBER OF FACTORS WHICH MAY BE BEHIND THE PLO DECISION, AS FOLLOWS:

(A) IN VIEW OF PERSISTENT BELIEF IN MANY QUARTERS THAT THERE IS A SYRIAN-MMARONITE-ISRAELI-U.S. PLAN TO ATTACK BEIRUT, PLO MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT, IF THIS IS INDEED TRUE, HOLDING OUR CONVOY WOULD SERVE PURPOSE OF DELAYING OR FORCING CANCELLATION OF THIS ATTACK. IF "PLOT" IS MERELY A CANARD, ON OTHER HAND, PLO ACTION WOULD AT LEAST ALLEVIATE POPULAR APPREHENSIONS IN WEST BEIRUT CONCERNING ITS PROSPECT.

WHILE SOME MEMBERS OF THE PLO LEADERSHIP MAY WELL GIVE CREDENCE TO THIS "PLOT," I BELIEVE THAT MORE ASTUTE TOP LEADERSHIP PROBABLY DOES NOT RPT NOT. PRESUMABLY THE LATTER IS NEVERTHELESS CONCERNED BY THE DESTABILIZING EFFECT IN WEST BEIRUT OF COMBINATION OF POPULAR

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ANTICIPATION OF AN ATTACK PLUS UMS. EVACUATION EFFORT.

(B) ANOTHER ELEMENT IN PLO THINKING MAY BE FEELING LF PLO LEADERS THAT BY WITHHOLDING PERMISSION FOR THE CONVOY, THEY MIGHT SOMEHOW BE PUTTING PRESSURE ON SYRIANS THROUGH US WITH REGARD TO UPCOMING PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN DIALOGUE. FACT THAT ABU JAAFER STRESSED ASSAD'S SPEECH IN HIS TALK WITH RSO, AND REFERRED TO UPCOMING PLO-SYRIAN TALKS, SUGGESTS THAT SOMEHOW PLO MAY FEEL THAT HOLDING OUR CONVOY "HOSTAGE" COULD WORK TO PLO'S ADVANTAGE IN THIS REGARD.

(C) EVEN IF PLO LEADERS ARE NOT RPT NOT NONCERNED RE POSSIBLE IMMINENT ATTACK ON WEST BEIRUT, THEY PROBABLY DO NOT LIKE IDEA AT THIS POINT OF A MAJOR EVACUATION FROM BEIRUT. WE UNDERSTAND ARAFAT IS FURIOUS THAT 900 PALESTINIANS DEPARTED FROM SIDON RECENTLY, AND HE MAY HAVE BEEN TAKEN ABACKBY A FIGURE OF 400-PLUS LEAVING IN OUR CONVOY. THIS COULD PERHAPS BE TAKEN AS REFLECTING POORLY ON PLO'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND STABILITY IN WEST BEIRUT, BUT, MORE IMPORTANT, IT DIMINISHES THE HOSTAGE POTENTIAL OF A FOREIGN PRESENCE IN WEST BEIRUT IN EVENT OF AN ATTACK.

3. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT, IN ADDITION TO FOREGOING POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS, PLO CONTINUES TO HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT A ROAD CONVOY. WHILE ABU JAAFER HAS NEVER OBJECTED TO THIS FORM OF EVACUATION, WE KNOW THAT FAROUK QADDOUMI TOLD EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR LAST WEEK THAT SEA EVACUATION WOULD BE PREFERABLE, AND WE RECALL THAT PLO OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD SAUDIS SAME THING. SECURITY FOR SEA OR AIR EVACUATION IS PROBABLY SIMPLER, OR AT LEAST SPANS A MMUCH SHORTER PERIOD OF TIME. IF INDEED THIS IS A CONSIDERATION IN PLO THINKING, IT MIGHT HAVE STRENGTHENED ARAFAT'S HAND IN MAKING POLITICAL DECISION TO POSTPONE CONVOY.

4. I BELIEVE THAT PLO IS UNLIKELY TO POSTPONE CONVOY'S DEPARTURE INDEFINITELY, UNLESS IT CAN MAKE MORE EFFECTIVE SECURITY CASE. I APPRECIATE DEPT'S JUDGEMENT THAT PLO MUST KNOW THAT FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD IT IS GONG TO NEED USG SUPPORT WITH REGARD TO PALESTINIAN PLACE IN ANY PEACE SETTLEMENT. HOWEVER, IT IS MY VIEW THAT THIS CONSIDERATION IS NOT RPT NOT UPPERMOST IN PLO MINDS AT THIS JUNCTURE. I DON'T THINK IT IS IN BACK OF MINDS OF PLO LEADERS RIGHT NOW. FOR MOMENT PLO IS CONCERNED WITH ITS IMMEDIATE SURVIVAL, WHICH COULD TO LARGE EXTENT BE AFFECTED BY WHAT COMES OUT OF PLO'S TALKS WITH SYRIA. IF PLO INTERPRETS SYRIANS' OFFER AS SUPPRESSION OF PLO MOVEMENT, PLO WILL NOT BE MUCH COMFORTED

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BY KNOWLEDGE THAT SOME DAY U.S., THROUGH ITS INFLUENCE WITH ISRAEL, MIGHT GET THEM A PIECE OF THE CAKE.

5. IP LIGHT OF FOREGONG, I PROPOSE THAT I BE AUTHORIZED IMMEDIATELY TO TAKE FOLLOWING ACTION:  
ISSUE A PUBLIC STATEMENT REITERATING OUR OSITION ON LEBANON AND THE PALESTINIANS, WITHOUT, HOWEVER, REFERRING TO THE "PLOT."  
I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL IN

CLEARING THE AIR FOR OUR EOACUATION  
AND IN OVERCOMING LINGERING SUSPICIONS OF WHAT WE ARE UP TO IF  
EMBASSY COULD MAKE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:  
BEGIN TEXT: IN VIEW OF CERTAIN MISUNDERSTANDINGS WHICH  
HAVE ARISEN IN THE PAST WEEK IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE, THE AMERICAN  
EMBASSY WISHES TO REITERATE UNITED STATES POLICY CONCERNING LEBANON.  
AS HAS BEEN STATED REPEATEDLY, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS  
TOTALLY OPPOSED TO THE PARTITION OF LEBANON AND STRONGLY SUPPORTS A  
UNITED LEBANON WHOSE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY  
ARE FULLY RESPECTED.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WISHES TO SEE AN END TO THE  
TRAGIC FIGHTING AND A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES. IT WELCOMES  
ALL CONSTRUCTIVE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS AND STANDS READY TO  
HELP IN ANY WAY IT CAN.

WITH RESPECT TO THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, AS HAS BEEN STATED  
ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT  
A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LEGITIMATE  
INTERESTS OF THE PALESTINIANS. END TEXT.

6. GIVEN OUR CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH THE PLO, I THINK A RESTATEMENT  
AT THIS TIME OF OUR TRADITIONAL POSITION ON PALESTINIAN INTERESTS IS  
HIGHLY DESIRABLE. WHILE OF COURSE IT DOES NOT GO AS FAR AS PALESTINIANS  
WOULD LIKE, IT WOULD HELP DISABUSE THE MANY PALESTINIANS HERE OF  
THE IDEA THAT WE SUPPORT EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS THE PALESTINIAN  
MOVEMENT AND ARE IGNORING THE PALESTINIANS IN THE CONTEXT OF A  
MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT.

7. I HAVE DISCUSSED MY ANALYSIS OF PLO ACTIONS, AS WELL AS  
INITIATIVES I PROPOSE FOR DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION (PARA SIX  
ABOVE), WITH BRITISH AMBASSADOR PETER WAKEFIELD. HE CONCURS  
COMPLETELY WITH MY ANALYSIS AND ALSO CONCURS IN ADVISABILITY OF  
THESE INITIATIVES. TODAY HIS CONSULAR OFFICER HAS AN APPOINTMENT  
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WITH ABU JAAFER ON ANOTHER MATTER, AND WE AGREED THAT CONSULAR  
OFFICER SHOULD RAISE MATTER OF CONVOY. I URGED THAT CONSULAR  
OFFICER REFER TO NUMBER OF BRITISH CITIZENS IN CONVOY AND EXPRESS  
BRITISH CONCERN THAT THEY NOT RPT NOT ENABLED TO DEPART PROMPTLY.

8. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS: BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAS JUST  
INFORMED MTLMF RESULT OF HIS CONSULAR OFFICER'S VISIT WITH ABU  
JAAFER. IN REPLYING TO CONSULAR OFFICER'S INQUIRY CONCERNING  
POSTPONEMENT OF CONVOY, ABU JAAFER EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT  
BRITISH INTEREST. CONSULAR OFFICER TOLD HIM THAT NUMBER OF  
BRITISH CITIZENS ARE INVOLVED AND THEY ARE ANXIOUS TO GET OUT.  
IN FURTHER DISCUSSION, ABU JAAFER ALLUDED TO PRINCE FAHD'S  
CALL TO ARAFAT, WHICH LED TO CONVOY'S POSTPONEMENT. ABU  
JAAFER GAVE IMPRESSION THAT ARAFAT WAS IRKED AT SAUDI INTERVENTION  
AND WANTED TO DEMONSTRATE BY HIS ACTION PLO'S INDEPENDENCE.

FURTHERMORE, HE CLAIMED THAT PLO IS ALSO UNHAPPY WITH NEGATIVE  
USG REACTION TO POSTPONEMENT, EVIDENTLY HAVING GOTTEN IMPRESSION  
THAT PLO BEING SOMEHOW THREATENED. THUS, BRITISH CONSULAR  
OFFICER FELT THAT WHILE POLITICAL FACTORS ALLUDED TO ABOVE NO DOUBT  
CONTRIBUTED TO POSTPONEMENT DECISION, SAUDI INTERVENTION AND OUR  
RESPONSE TO POSTPONEMENT ACTION WERE FURTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.

9. COMMENT: ASSUMING BRITISH CONSULAR OFFICER IPRESSIONS  
ARE CORRECT, IT WOULD SEEM ADVISABLE FOR US TO EAST PRESSURES  
WE ARE NOW PLACING ON PLO HERE, IN CAIRO AND IN JIDDA, AND LET  
DUST SETTLE A BIT. IF WE SIT BACK WE MIGHT WELL GET PLO-INITIATED  
APPROVAL FOR EVACUATION EARLY NEXT WEEK. INCIDENTALLY, BRITISH  
CONSULAR OFFICER GO IMPRESSION THAT PLO DOES NOT RPT NOT HAVE  
ANY OBJECTION TO LAND CONVOY AND INDEED MAY PREFER IT TO SEA  
EVACUATION.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** EMERGENCY EVACUATION, CITIZEN PROTECTION, POLITICAL STABILITY, PROGRESS REPORTS, HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION, CAT-A  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 JUL 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** greeneet  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976BEIRUT06506  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** AD: JIDDA, SECRETARY  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** P840084-1373  
**From:** BEIRUT  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760734/aaaabdgm.tel  
**Line Count:** 185  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NODS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS, EXDIS  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS, EXDIS  
**Reference:** 76 STATE 180858, 76 BEIRUT 6497  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** greeneet  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 09 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by greeneet>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** BEIRUT EVACUATION  
**TAGS:** PFOR, AEMR, LE, US, SY, PLO, (ARAFAT, YASSER)  
**To:** STATE CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA SS  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006